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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A purified or isolated nucleic acid consisting of the sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.: 1 or the complement thereof.

2. (Currently Amended) A purified or isolated ~~fragment of a~~ nucleic acid comprising at least 50 consecutive nucleotides of the sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.: 1 or the complement thereof, ~~wherein said fragment consists of at least 9 consecutive nucleotides~~.

3. (Currently Amended) The purified or isolated nucleic acid fragment of Claim 2, ~~wherein said fragment consists of~~ comprising at least ~~12~~ 100 consecutive nucleotides of SEQ. ID. No. 1.

4. (Currently Amended) The purified or isolated nucleic acid fragment of Claim 2, comprising at least ~~18~~ 200 consecutive nucleotides of SEQ. ID. No. 1.

5. (Currently Amended) The purified or isolated nucleic acid fragment of Claim 2, ~~wherein said fragment consists of~~ comprising at least ~~21~~ 500 consecutive nucleotides of SEQ. ID. No. 1.

6. (Currently Amended) The purified or isolated nucleic acid fragment of Claim 2, ~~wherein said fragment consists of~~ comprising at least ~~24~~ 1000 consecutive nucleotides of SEQ. ID. No. 1.

7. (Original) A purified or isolated nucleic acid consisting essentially of SEQ. ID. NO.: 1.

8. (Currently Amended) A purified or isolated nucleic acid comprising a sequence encoding a peptide ~~selected from the group consisting of the sequence~~ of SEQ. ID. NO.: 2, ~~SEQ. ID. NO.: 3, SEQ. ID. NO.: 4, SEQ. ID. NO.: 5, SEQ. ID. NO.: 6, SEQ. ID. NO.: 7, SEQ. ID. NO.: 8, SEQ. ID. NO.: 9, SEQ. ID. NO.: 10, and SEQ. ID. NO.: 11~~.

9. (Canceled) A fragment of the nucleic acid of Claim 8, wherein said fragment encodes a peptide selected from the group consisting of SEQ. ID. NO.: 14, SEQ. ID. NO.: 15, SEQ. ID. NO.: 16, SEQ. ID. NO.: 17, SEQ. ID. NO.: 18, SEQ. ID. NO.: 19, SEQ. ID. NO.: 20, SEQ. ID. NO.: 21, SEQ. ID. NO.: 22, SEQ. ID. NO.: 23, SEQ. ID. NO.: 24, SEQ. ID. NO.: 25, and SEQ. ID. NO.: 26.

10. (Original) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 1.

11. (Original) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 1.

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12. (Canceled) A purified or isolated peptide consisting of the sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.: 2.

13. (Canceled) A purified or isolated fragment of a peptide of the sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.: 2, wherein said fragment consists of at least 9 consecutive amino acids.

14. (Canceled) The fragment of Claim 11, wherein said fragment consists of at least 12 consecutive amino acids.

15. (Canceled) The fragment of Claim 11, wherein said fragment consists of at least 15 consecutive amino acids.

16. (Canceled) The fragment of Claim 11, wherein said fragment consists of at least 18 consecutive amino acids.

17. (Canceled) The fragment of Claim 11, wherein said fragment consists of at least 21 consecutive amino acids.

18. (Canceled) A purified or isolated peptide consisting essentially of SEQ. ID. NO.: 2.

19. (Canceled) A purified or isolated peptide selected from the group consisting of SEQ. ID. NO.: 2, SEQ. ID. NO.: 3, SEQ. ID. NO.: 4, SEQ. ID. NO.: 5, SEQ. ID. NO.: 6, SEQ. ID. NO.: 7, SEQ. ID. NO.: 8, SEQ. ID. NO.: 9, SEQ. ID. NO.: 10, and SEQ. ID. NO.: 11.

20. (Canceled) A fragment of the peptide of Claim 17, wherein said fragment encodes a peptide selected from the group consisting of SEQ. ID. NO.: 14, SEQ. ID. NO.: 15, SEQ. ID. NO.: 16, SEQ. ID. NO.: 17, SEQ. ID. NO.: 18, SEQ. ID. NO.: 19, SEQ. ID. NO.: 20, SEQ. ID. NO.: 21, SEQ. ID. NO.: 22, SEQ. ID. NO.: 23, SEQ. ID. NO.: 24, SEQ. ID. NO.: 25, and SEQ. ID. NO.: 26.

21. (Canceled) An isolated or purified antibody that directly interacts with the peptide of Claims 12.

22. (Canceled) The antibody of Claim 21, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

23. (Canceled) A method of identifying the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in a subject comprising:

providing a biological sample obtained from said subject;

providing a nucleic acid of any one of Claims 1-9;

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contacting said nucleic acid with a target nucleic acid obtained from said biological sample under conditions that permit hybridization; and

detecting the presence or absence of a nucleic acid hybrid consisting of said nucleic acid and said target nucleic acid whereby the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in said subject is identified.

24. (Canceled) The method of Claim 23, wherein the detection step comprises amplification of at least a fragment of said target nucleic acid.

25. (Canceled) A method of identifying the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in a subject comprising:

providing a biological sample obtained from said subject;

providing an antibody of Claims 21 or 22;

contacting said antibody with a peptide obtained from said biological sample under conditions that permit binding; and

detecting the presence or absence of a biological complex consisting of said antibody and said peptide whereby the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in said subject is identified.

26. (Canceled) A method of identifying the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in a subject comprising:

providing a biological sample obtained from said subject;

providing a peptide of any one of Claims 12-20;

contacting said peptide with said biological sample or antibodies obtained from said biological sample under conditions that permit binding; and

detecting the presence or absence of a biological complex consisting of said peptide and an antibody whereby the presence or absence of hepatitis C virus in said subject is identified.

27. (Currently Amended) ~~A medicament~~ An immunogenic composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 1.

28. (Currently Amended) The ~~medicament~~ immunogenic composition of Claim 27, further comprising an adjuvant.

29. (Canceled) A medicament comprising the peptide of Claim 12.

30. (Canceled) The medicament of Claim 29, further comprising an adjuvant.

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31. (Original) A purified or isolated nucleic acid comprising SEQ. ID. NO.: 1.
32. (Canceled) A purified or isolated peptide comprising SEQ. ID. NO.: 2.
33. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 2.
34. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 2.
35. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 3.
36. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 3.
37. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 4.
38. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 4.
39. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 5.
40. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 5.
41. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 6.
42. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 6.
43. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 7.
44. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 7.
45. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 8.
46. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 8.
47. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 1.
48. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 2.
49. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 3.
50. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 4.
51. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 5.
52. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 6.
53. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 7.
54. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 8.
55. (New) The composition of Claim 47 further comprising an adjuvant.
56. (New) The composition of Claim 48 further comprising an adjuvant.
57. (New) The composition of Claim 49 further comprising an adjuvant.
58. (New) The composition of Claim 50 further comprising an adjuvant.
59. (New) The composition of Claim 51 further comprising an adjuvant.
60. (New) The composition of Claim 52 further comprising an adjuvant.
61. (New) The composition of Claim 53 further comprising an adjuvant.

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- 62. (New) The composition of Claim 54 further comprising an adjuvant.
- 63. (New) The composition of Claim 47 further comprising ribavirin.
- 64. (New) The composition of Claim 48 further comprising ribavirin.
- 65. (New) The composition of Claim 49 further comprising ribavirin.
- 66. (New) The composition of Claim 50 further comprising ribavirin.
- 67. (New) The composition of Claim 51 further comprising ribavirin.
- 68. (New) The composition of Claim 52 further comprising ribavirin.
- 69. (New) The composition of Claim 53 further comprising ribavirin.
- 70. (New) The composition of Claim 54 further comprising ribavirin.
- 71. (New) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 31.
- 72. (New) A cell comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 31.
- 73. (New) A composition comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 31.
- 74. (New) The composition of Claim 73 further comprising an adjuvant.
- 75. (New) The composition of Claim 74 further comprising ribavirin.